

Complicated by TheLostSister

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Summary:

June 1985.

Joyce and Hop have been getting it on in secret for awhile now. When Hopper arrives to Joyce's empty house with her in the shower, he can't help but join in.

1. Chapter 1

Today was Joyce's day off. She was relaxing at the table with the newspaper and a cup of coffee when Will popped in to say goodbye for the day. The kids were all meeting to pick up El at the cabin before heading back to Mike's house. Once it hit warmer weather, Hopper eventually conceded and actually let El leave their house during the day while he was at work, as long as she never went out alone.

Well, that was never an issue. The boy didn't leave her side, *ever*. And for Hop, that was becoming pretty damn irritating.

If he didn't have Joyce around to commiserate with, he really would have been losing his mind by now. However, she always managed to calm him down...especially now that they were sleeping together.

The two were drunk the first time they crossed the invisible friendship line that had been drawn between them for years. It was no one's fault in particular; they were both equally as trashed. It didn't take but more than a few glasses for either of them to get to that point these days anyway.

Well, one nervous kiss turned into clothes falling off, and then they were naked in Joyce's bed. The sex that night was sloppy, frenzied, and hot.

So hot.

Hopper may have been drunk and things were a little bit fuzzy when he thought about that night, but the way Joyce cried out his name as she came hard underneath him would forever be burned in his memory.

One of his favorite memories.

Nursing their hangovers that next morning over a cup of coffee, Hopper had quietly offered Joyce an apology for getting carried away. He thought that she was just being the kind person that she was, when she promised him that it was okay. That "it was nice,"

even, as she lightly squeezed his arm in reassurance.

But then it happened again a few weeks later, with zero liquor involved, and soon, it turned into a regular occurrence. Though they didn't know why, El and Will were as equally pleased to be allowed more sleepovers away from their own houses with their friends. It was sort of a win-win for everyone.

The time the two of them spent together proved to be a really great distraction for Hop, not just from El growing up before his eyes, but from a lot of things. Joyce would be lying if she said it wasn't a good distraction for her too. A time when she could get lost in something besides the immense guilt and anxiety that always seemed to follow her around.

Hopper wanted to tell Joyce how much he cared about her so many times since this all began. In fact, the words almost slipped out more than once in a post orgasmic murmur before they hitched in his throat.

Hopper would be damned if he screwed this up and made things worse by complicating what they had.

They enjoyed having each other around, and the sex was good. No, *no*...the sex was great.

Period.

End of story.

They weren't in an official relationship, and it wasn't like they planned to tell the kids, *oh yeah, by the way, Joyce and I are screwing each other. But don't worry, it's nothing serious. It's not like we are in love with each other or anything like that...*

This particular day in June was warm, but a bit dark and dreary. Things at the station had been slow. Hopper liked it slow, but damn if the days didn't seem to just drag on and on. He shuffled the papers on his desk into a pile and looked at the clock with a groan. Barely 11 AM.

There wasn't anything left to do in the office so he grabbed his hat

and keys and headed out to the front door.

“Where you headed Chief?” Flo called from behind him.

He paused at the door and grumbled, “Lunch.”

Her eyes panned to the clock and she raised her eyebrows. “Bit early for lunch, isn’t it?”

“Skipped breakfast,” he excused, giving her a wave goodbye.

She stood up from her desk and called a bit louder so he could hear her. “And when can we expect you back?”

“Oh...ya know...” he yelled back over his shoulder before the door closed, leaving her behind shaking her head.

The man could be frustratingly lazy sometimes, but when it came to important things, he always made sure they were taken care of, and she couldn’t fault him for that.

Hopper climbed in his Blazer and made a quick stop at Melvald’s only to find out that it was Joyce’s day off. He truly hadn’t intended on coming over for a quickie, but when he arrived to a silent house free of children, he found himself smiling just a little at his luck.

Hopper entered her home without knocking, a custom that began just shortly after the new year when he and El started coming over so often that it just became routine.

He didn’t see Joyce right away at her usual spot in the kitchen or living room, but then he caught the splash of water running in the bathroom and surmised she was in the shower.

Hopper *did* knock on that door. She wasn’t expecting him, and he hadn’t intended to startle her showing up unannounced.

“What is it, honey?” Joyce answered.

Hopper cracked the door open and leaned against the door frame. “*Honey*. I kind of like that,” he mused.

“Jesus, Hop!” Joyce exclaimed. The shower curtain peeled back just enough for him to see her face. “I thought you were one of the kids.”

“Yeah, yeah,” he teased in faux disappointment. He wouldn’t have minded if Joyce called him honey, or baby, or any other term of endearment. But again, that was all too complicated. “Kids aren’t home?” he questioned for good measure.

“No. And I’ll be out in a few minutes,” she promised, closing the shower curtain back up.

“Okay,” he called back. Joyce heard the bathroom door click closed and shook her head. Her heart was still beating just a bit too fast at the surprise of hearing his voice instead of one of her children’s, but she really was happy to see him.

Hopper didn’t allow himself much time to debate over what he was about to do next, as he had already taken the first step of shutting himself in the bathroom with her. As silently as possible, he kicked his boots off, unlatched his belt, and undressed, smirking at his dick that was already twitching in anticipation.

Joyce had presumed that when the door shut, Hopper was on the other side of it in the hallway, so she didn’t manage to hear any of that over the sounds of the water falling against the tub. When the shower curtain opened sending a rush of cool air against her skin, she jumped back in surprise.

“Hop, what are you doing?!” Her startled tone quickly turned to a laugh as she eyed Hopper’s nakedness.

“Uh, hey,” he nodded and smiled awkwardly, stepping over the side, joining her in the tub.

“*What* are you doing,” she repeated, though her tone softened at the end.

“I just, uh, you know, the kids aren’t here...work was slow...” he shrugged. He felt the briefest bit of embarrassment at this idea now as her eyes seemed to burn a hole right through him.

“I see. And so you thought we’d just, what...” she paused. Her eyes

were wide, challenging him to go on.

"I don't know," he laughed nervously, nearly losing all his confidence under her intense gaze. She was such a tiny woman, yet she could give such powerful looks. Joyce could literally make his knees weak without even trying. "I could, I don't know, maybe give you a hand washing up?" he tried to ask seductively.

But Jim Hopper was not so great at flirting. At least, not anymore. *Not when it was Joyce Byers.*

"Thanks, but I think I'm a grown lady who can handle that on her own."

His heart sank. The instant look of rejection on the poor guy's face was too much, and Joyce couldn't keep torturing him any longer.

"I'm kidding!" she promised quickly, taking a step towards him. Her wet hand wrapped around his bicep to pull him closer, and a small trickle of water dripped down his chest. "I'm glad you're here. I've missed you, Jim," she reassured him with a smile.

Then he realized it.

That was it. That was his term of endearment.

Jim.

It was only his name, but it always sounded different, somehow special, when she chose to call him that instead of some variation of Hopper.

Joyce pulled the shower curtain shut and stood on her tip toes. Her hand buried in his hair and she directed him down to her lips for a gentle kiss.

"I-," he stuttered, when she pulled back. "Missed you too."

Hopper let out an undetected sigh. It was an understatement, but again, complicated.

His comment easily could have been taken literally. The last time

they were together, the kids came home much earlier than planned and interrupted their private time. Thank god they were in her bedroom behind a locked door, just in case. The two had quickly gotten dressed and made up some excuse about how Hop was there helping fix her dresser drawer that was always falling out. That was over a week ago, 9 days to be exact if anyone was counting.

And Hopper *was* counting.

Joyce stepped back under the stream of water and raked her hands through her wet hair, smoothing it back away from her face with both hands. Hopper tried so hard not to ogle at her breasts that softly bounced as her arms raised, but she caught him staring and a slight blush rose to her cheeks.

There was something different about being with Hopper. It was never just about getting him off like it always was with Lonnie.

In fact, he was pretty much the exact opposite of Lonnie, the man she wasted too many years of her life with.

Hopper's taste, his smell, his touch...but especially, the fact that she felt safe with him, like she knew she could tell him no or ask him to stop at any time and he actually would. That was all a relatively new concept for her that started over the past year with Bob and now Hop.

While Bob was actually maybe just a little too safe, Hopper wasn't afraid to challenge her and push her, all while still respecting her boundaries. That applied to all parts of their relationship with each other, not just during sex.

Having an unspoken, mutual respect for each other was funny in that sense.

Just the second time they got together, Hopper's mouth traveled down her stomach and continued even further without hesitation. She didn't tell him that it was the first time anyone had ever done that for her. In fact, he still had no idea, though he surely would have been appalled at her exes even more than he already was if he ever found out.

“You don’t have to,” she remembers telling him, like it was a chore for him to have to please her.

“But can I?” he had asked her eagerly, his intense blue eyes looking up at her from between her thighs, waiting for approval.

Having no liquor involved that night left her inhibitions high, and she’d started off so self-conscious about it all.

What if she didn’t taste right? Did she smell nice? Was he getting bored? However, as Hopper’s hands patiently explored her every curve, she found herself slipping a little further into oblivion under his mouth. It was like he actually...enjoyed it?

That night eventually ended with her panting and writhing so hard she ended up with red fingerprint marks from where he had kept a grip on the back sides of her thighs to hold her in place on the bed.

In Hopper’s eyes, Joyce had nothing to worry about anyway. Aside from the c-section scars, you would have had no idea that her body created two little human beings. Despite her modesty and insecurities, Hopper felt that Joyce hadn’t aged a day since high school.

Whereas his own body, well, that surely reflected every bit of the abuse he’d put himself through in the 43 years he’d been alive. He had a few too many grey hairs popping up in his facial hair, his love handles were a bit bigger than he’d care to admit, and his pants were starting to fit obnoxiously tighter than they had even just a few months ago.

Though initially Hop was a little self-conscious too, the few extra pounds didn’t matter one bit to Joyce. In fact, his sheer size turned her on the most. It made her feel so safe, and she wouldn’t change a thing about his body.

Well, maybe other than his prickly beard that often scratched at her sensitive skin leaving little red bumps on her cheeks and thighs, especially when she was already too warm and sweaty...which was often when she was with him these days. Joyce had casually mentioned once that it was a little scratchy, and the next time she

saw him, he had shaved it all off leaving only a mustache.

Her eyes widened when he and El walked in the front door for dinner and she quickly came over to greet him.

“Did you do this for me?” she whispered with a smirk. Her fingertips quickly grazed his smooth cheek, before her hands dropped back down before anyone else could notice her little accidental slip of affection.

He shook his head and stroked his face. “Just thought I could use a change. I guess this look is ‘in’ right now,” he said throwing up air quotes. “At least, that’s what El said...when her and Mike got done laughing,” he admitted with a sheepish shrug. Being laughed at by two fourteen year olds wasn’t exactly the look he’d been going for, but hey, there hadn’t been much he could do about it now.

“It looks nice,” Joyce had promised.

Admittedly, she thought the beard was a little sexier. And she’d never seen him without a beard in the six years since he’d been back in Hawkins. Still, the whole thing made her smile. The fact that he did that for her...and that he’d actually kept the mustache thing going without immediately deciding to regrow his beard back.

Now standing there in the shower when Hop couldn’t take staring at her any longer and his mouth trailed down her skin, his facial hair was just a little itchy, but certainly less than what it used to be. Hopper made quick work of her breasts; they were one of his favorite features of hers. His hand freely massaged her ivory skin, while his tongue flicked across her nipple. Joyce whimpered in surprise when he bit down on her ever so gently, before quickly nursing it with two soft, apologetic kisses.

“Hop,” she chirped playfully, grabbing the back of his head to drag him back up to her mouth. Joyce settled one hand on the back of his neck.

“Sorry, you’re just...mmm,” he groaned, at a loss for the appropriate words. Her fingertips lightly stroked his hair while she enjoyed every second of attention his hands and mouth continued to pay her.

One hand moved down her back to the curve of her butt, giving it a firm squeeze. Joyce pulled that leg up and draped it around him to steadily grind herself against him. Her own hands dropped between their bodies to wrap around his already fully erect cock, giving it a couple slow strokes.

Hopper pulled back just enough to fit his hand between them too. The water was already nice and warm, but as his fingers delved in the folds between Joyce's legs, he was pleased to find her already slick with own arousal too. It was almost ridiculous how quickly they managed to get each other off. A lot of foreplay had never been required, but where was the fun in that?

He curled his hand around and entered her with one finger, then two. Joyce was so damn tight. So much so that he only ever attempted one or two fingers at the most. He didn't have the smallest hands, and the last thing he ever wanted to do was hurt her.

He pushed them inside her up to his second knuckle, thrusting them back and forth three times before pulling them out to rub her clit. His hand repeated those movements, finger fucking and clit rubbing, until the coils deep in her stomach tightened, threatening orgasm. She clung onto his arm with her free hand as her whimpers filled the once silent bathroom. Hopper knew he was hitting the right spot when her hand working his cock would slow and tighten around him for a moment, his hips jerking back and forth lightly against her when she couldn't manage to move on her own.

Joyce was just as good with her hands and mouth as he was, but he desperately wanted to be inside her when she came. Hopper pulled his hands from her aching, wet cunt, causing her to glance up at him with a little cry. Her eyes were so dark and needy that he felt a bit guilty for not finishing her off right there.

Joyce could sense what Hopper was planning to do next, but she was pretty certain their height difference was going to make it nearly impossible. She hadn't yet let up her grip on his already red and swollen cock. Instead, she kneeled before him, her tongue replacing where her hand was, teasing his head. The water dripping down his chest left him nice and slippery, nearly washing away all of his precum that had already oozed out. However, when she wrapped her

mouth around him and sucked up and down, she still received a hint of his salty taste.

Her hand copied the same ministrations lower on his cock as he was far too big for her to take all of in her mouth. Jim threw his head back and palmed the wall. Joyce's other free hand gently roamed the back of his thigh, her fingertips lightly tracing his skin until he felt like he was going to explode. It took every ounce of self-control to pull his hips away from her. She looked up at him in question, as he bent over slightly to grab her under her arm to help her up.

"Turn around," he panted gruffly in her ear.

"You really think this is going to work?" Joyce doubted.

Despite her disbelief, she couldn't contain a breathy moan of anticipation when she felt the the pressure of his hard, wet cock insistently pressing against the bare skin of her back.

"What do you mean?" he asked, turning her around so she faced the longest wall of the tub.

"I'm like-- not tall enough for this to ever work out," she explained, shaking her head.

Hopper just arched his eyebrows at the challenge.

"I think I can figure it out," he promised, pushing her slightly forward towards the wall.

His hand gripped her thigh and pulled her leg up, carefully resting her foot on the inner corner of the bathtub. He had to crouch over just a little, but it didn't take much adjustment for his thick cock to slip inside her, filling her up with such a sudden pressure that her muscles clenched down on him immediately.

He waited a moment for her to relax and adjust before he tentatively thrust into her a few times. He wasn't going to lie. He had really needed a moment too.

The angle wasn't quite right, and Joyce shifted a little to move to her tip toes on her foot that had remained on the ground. She pressed

both hands against the wall for support as Hopper continued pumping his hips back and forth behind her. He wrapped a hand around her stomach, his fingers pressing into her skin as he held her possessively close. His other hand found her breasts, having little intention other than to simply hold on, massaging her soft flesh, his thumb grazing her erect nipple.

Joyce's small hand covered his much larger one on her stomach, lacing her fingers over the top of his. She threw her head back and let out a whimper.

"This okay?" he questioned, his voice low in her ear. He paused for a moment, buried deep inside her.

Another accidentally louder moan slipped out of her lips, nonverbally answering his question before she also replied, "Mm-hmm."

"Okay. Good," he nodded, resuming a slightly rougher pace.

Joyce's hand dropped from his and moved down to her clit. In seconds, Hop's hand was there too; he loved the sounds she made when she was touched there, especially when he'd bring her right to the edge only to pull all stimulation away for a second. The way she always whined, like she was trying to be a good girl and hold it in, though she never could manage to prevent the sounds from escaping her lips.

And thank god for Hop's hands now, because Joyce really needed both of hers to hold herself up so that she didn't completely crumple against his thrusts. It didn't take long for her supporting leg on the ground to cramp up, and she let out another cry as the pain only seemed to fuel her internal ache. She leaned forward against the wall and pressed her face to it, reveling at the cool touch of the tile in stark contrast to the humid, fog laden air around them.

After a few moments, she dropped her heel back to the ground, and Hopper immediately sensed her discomfort at having to stand this way. He pulled out completely, and she barely had enough time to whine in disapproval, before he turned her back around to face him. He lifted her under her thighs, picking her up, pressing her against the wall.

The shock of the cold tile on Joyce's back caused her to emit a sharp gasp.

"What? What is it? Are you okay?" Hop immediately worried.

"No, no. It's fine. It's just cold. It was just cold," she quickly promised twice, wrapping her arms around his neck, kissing his worried mouth.

He pulled back a little.

"You sure?"

"*Jesus*, Jim. Yes. Fuck me, please," Joyce uncharacteristically demanded, her heels digging into the backs of his thighs as she squirmed against him.

That earned a chuckle. His mouth was right next to her ear when he whispered, "Yes, ma'am."

Her mouth fell open and she moaned into his shoulder as he lowered her slightly back down on him. Hopper couldn't thrust into her as hard as he previously had. He had to be a little more careful now; the tub was slippery, and though her arms and legs were wrapped around him and he held her tightly under both thighs, Joyce was slippery too. Instead, he settled for a slightly slower grind that would keep her in place without much effort.

Feeling Hopper's thick thighs and massive chest crushing her against the wall was an absolute dream. She turned her face slightly to avoid the water that bounced off his back and sprayed in her eyes.

"Fuck Joyce," Hopper groaned. He dropped his head down right next to hers to protect her just a little bit more.

There was so much more he could have said in that moment, but he was never that eloquent with words, and it was especially challenging to find them now.

Together, they set a steady pace, her breasts bouncing ever so slightly as they were pressed against his own chest. Hop's heavy breathing in her ear getting more and more uneven as he grunted. Joyce loved

that sound just as much as he loved the soft moans she let out with every breath. Soon, Hop's movements started getting a little bit faster, a little more erratic and desperate, his unintentional groans a bit louder in her ear.

"Oh, yes, please, Jim, please," Joyce whimpered and begged in his ear when his hips seemed to find the perfect rhythm.

That was...until they both heard something at the exact same time.

Kids. Laughing. In the house.

Their eyes shot open, and they both instantly froze, Hop not even daring to so much as pull out or set her down.

Then a knock on the door.

"Mom, are you almost done? We need towels," Will called from the hallway.

Joyce didn't answer for a moment, as if they would all just go away if she said nothing. He knocked again, this time a little louder.

"Mom!"

She squeezed her eyes shut in disappointment.

"Uh, yeah. Just a minute!" Joyce called back.

"I thought they were going to Mike's house today," Hopper grimaced with a whisper.

Now that they were no longer focused on just the two of them, they could hear the steady pitter patter of a summer storm pounding on the roof. It was obvious before if they had been paying any attention.

After going to pick up El, the kids were caught outside in the rain and happened to be just a bit closer to the Byers' house than Mike's, running there for cover, though not before all getting thoroughly soaked.

Hopper reluctantly lifted Joyce off him and set her down in the tub

that now seemed entirely too small for two adults to be in at the same time. He took special care to not make any suspicious noises.

“Mom!” Will called again. “Can I just come in and get some towels real quick?”

“No, sweetie. I think the door is locked.” It wasn’t. “Why don’t you just use the pool towels in the back room?”

“Okay!” he called back, and then it was quiet again, though not silent. They could still hear the kids talking, but at least they weren’t all standing just feet away now.

“Why does this keep happening and how in the hell are we going to get you out of here”, Joyce moaned quietly in annoyance. She buried her face in her hands and all but cried out in frustration against his chest. He pulled her close and wrapped his arms around her.

“We are... not very good at this lately,” Hopper admitted in a hushed whisper of defeat.

Joyce pressed her naked body against his as if that would have been enough for her to still come. *God, how she still ached for him.* She could only imagine what he was feeling like edging that close to ejaculation with no release. And twice now, thanks to their children and very poor timing.

“At least let me finish you,” she whispered suddenly, looking up at him hopefully with her big, doe eyes. Her hand was already latched on to his still throbbing cock before he could even get a word out.

“You can’t be serious,” he whispered, shaking his head and grabbing her wrist to stop her movements.

She nodded feverishly. “Why not? We are already stuck in here together. And you were close right?” She really hadn’t needed to ask. She could tell he was by the way his movements always became slightly sharper right before he came.

“I was but-“

Joyce interrupted Hop’s excuse giving his cock a few tugs, his own

hand still encircled around her wrist.

And then there was another knock. "I can't find them!"

"Oh my God," she cried out quietly. "Next to the washing machine, in the white basket." Joyce tried to keep all of the frustration out of her voice to sound patient and normal when she answered.

"Are you sure? I didn't see them."

"Yes, I washed them on Sunday," Joyce answered, her eyes pressed closed feeling like this conversation would never end.

"Okay, I'll look again."

She still hadn't let go of Hop's cock. His hand was preventing hers from moving but she continued rubbing her thumb over the sensitive tip instead.

"Our kids are literally right outside this door!" he urged, squeezing her wrist just a bit tighter in insistence.

"Then I guess you should be a little quieter," she mouthed in warning. She pulled her hand from his, before regripping him and quickly moving her fingers up and down his shaft just like he'd done so many times to himself when he needed a quick release.

And oh *fuck*, apparently he was still very close.

Literally too close to stop it from happening now. He pressed his eyes closed to stay silent and threw his head back as he shot a damn near small river all over her belly, his hips unintentionally bucking against her as he came.

He dropped his head to the top of hers, silently panting as she continued gently stroking every last drop from him. Hopper froze and collected himself, eventually placing a soft, lazy kiss on her forehead in defeat.

He sighed in quiet satisfaction. This complicated stuff was exhausting.

“See?” Joyce simply whispered, looking up at him sweetly. “Doesn’t that feel better?”

2. Chapter 2

“How the hell are we going to get out of here?” Hopper groaned, quickly running a towel over himself.

Joyce laughed lightly as she dried off too.

“What. Is this somehow funny?” Hopper whispered.

“Kind of. Yeah,” she smiled. “I mean this *is* the second time, Hop. Maybe we should just...”

“We should what- tell your kids I’m banging their mom?”

Joyce threw her hands up in the air. “I honestly don’t think they’d really care,” she admitted.

Then a voice was back outside the door again.

“Is Hopper here? We saw his car out front,” Will called through the door.

“Oh... um, yeah. We got caught out in the rain too. He’s just in here-drying off. He’ll be out in a minute.”

“*JOYCE*,” Hopper looked over at her and mouthed silently, struggling to get his pants on over his still damp skin.

“I don’t know... I panicked,” she whispered, throwing him his shirt.

“And so you decided to tell them that I’m in here with you?!” he hissed, his voice barely a whisper anymore.

She threw her hands up and ran the towel through her hair.

“How else would we explain you being in the bathroom at the same time?!” she argued back softly.

“We don’t! I don’t know- I just go out the window or something.”

Joyce looked at the tiny bathroom window and back to him, as if

silently asking, *and you're going to fit through there?*

Hopper sighed and stepped over to Joyce, lifting her chin up to look at him. "Can you at least look a little less like you just had sex?" he worried seriously, running his fingertips across her pink cheeks.

Joyce just laughed. "You need to go out first," she nodded, pushing him towards the door.

The kids were all standing in the kitchen still drying off when Hopper exited the hallway followed by Joyce a few moments later.

"What are you doing here?" El asked, looking at Hop.

The rest of the kids froze in place, instantly garnering some idea of what the two adults were doing when they saw the horribly masked, guilty expressions on their faces.

"Oh, um, I just came by for a minute to talk to Joyce. And um, I- got stuck out in the rain so I was just drying off."

El looked to Joyce and then back to Hopper.

"Your clothes aren't wet," she pointed out.

"What?"

"Your clothes," she repeated. "How come they aren't wet?"

"Oh, uh," Hopper ran his hands against his shirt. "They were just a little damp. My um, my uniform is meant to dry quickly," he stuttered.

"But your hair is really wet," El pressed on.

Joyce just stood quietly next to him while he continued to dig himself deeper into the hole.

"Yeah El, I don't know," Hopper sighed in flustered frustration. "It's pouring out there."

Watching the train wreck of poor excuses continue to unfold, the

other kids all seemed to officially confirm exactly what they had walked in on given the mutual looks of *oh my god* on their faces. The teens started to quietly trickle out of the room, with Max finally dragging El away before things got even more awkward.

When they got to the living room, Dustin slapped Will's back and said rather loudly, "Oh my god, your mom and the Chief were—"

"Don't say it," Will interrupted, his face crinkled in horror.

Everyone seemed to understand what was going on but El, whose eyebrows pinched together in confusion.

"What were Joyce and Hop doing?" she asked Max.

"They were *doing it*... in the shower," Max answered quietly. "That's disgusting."

"Oh," El replied, still having absolutely no idea what that meant.

"Hey, when they get married, Will and El will be brother and sister!" Dustin pointed out, earning himself a knock it off shove from Mike.

Back in the kitchen, Hopper paced the floor and Joyce reached for her cigarettes in the middle of the kitchen table.

"That could not have gone any worse," Hopper groaned.

Joyce just laughed and nodded in confirmation as she lit a cigarette.

"You uh, you think they know?" Hop asked, anxiously rubbing his forehead.

"Yep. Definitely," she nodded.

"Oh god," he sighed again. Joyce handed him the lit cigarette and he took a long drag. "You were a big help." He nudged her shoulder.

"Hey, I'm the one who said we should just tell them the truth," Joyce shrugged with a laugh.

"The truth is the last thing any of those kids wanted to hear," Hop

muttered.

“Okay, but if they ask again, we have to tell them that we are...” Joyce trailed off and walked towards the sink to look out the window.

They weren’t exactly *together*, and they weren’t dating, so what were they doing?

In the other room, El had the same question and honestly couldn’t wait any longer to get an answer.

“I’ll be right back,” she said quietly to Mike, leaving the others alone to play video games without her. This felt more important.

She found the two of them standing near the sink, or at least she thought they were both over there but Hopper was so close to Joyce that she couldn’t really even see her. His back was turned to El, and neither of them noticed that she had entered the room. They were talking so softly and something about seeing the two of them together now felt...different.

“Um,” El interrupted quietly. “What were you guys *really* doing today when we got back?”

Hopper tensed when he heard El’s voice, and he took a step back from Joyce.

Please no.

Joyce looked at Hopper, waiting for him to answer. It was *his* kid with the question after all.

He stood frozen and frankly looking a bit like a deer in headlights, so Joyce finally answered instead.

“Hopper and I were...”

Don’t say it, Hopper thought, hoping to will it into existence.

“...in the shower.”

Okay, could have been worse.

He desperately hoped that would be enough information for El, but of course it wasn't.

"Why?"

"Because Joyce and I kind of have...you know, been seeing each other," Hopper finally gathered the courage to say.

"In the shower?" El asked slowly.

"Okay," Hopper said, abruptly turning around and clapping his hands. "I need to go back to work but uh, maybe Joyce can finish this conversation."

"Uh-uh. No, no, no," Joyce said, grabbing the back of his shirt before he got too far.

"Joyce, no. I cannot," he exhaled quietly shaking his head.

"El," Joyce said calmly, turning back to address her, still clutching a fistful of Hopper's shirt in her hand. "Your dad and I were...making love."

Why'd she have to say it like that?! Hopper closed his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose, silently praying for someone to wake him up from this nightmare.

"Oh," El answered looking from Joyce to Hopper who still stood with his back turned to her. She sort of knew about that from watching soap operas, but it still didn't make sense. People took off their clothes and hugged and kissed in a *bed*, not in the shower.

"In the bathroom?" She questioned again only because it really made no sense.

Hopper had never truly wanted to die at any other point in his life like the way that he did in this moment. He wished for a bolt of lightning to come through the house and strike him down, just literally anything to keep this conversation from going on any longer.

Sex was the absolute last thing he ever wanted to talk about with El, much less, *his* sex life.

“Uh, yeah,” Joyce finally answered. “We really didn’t expect you guys to come back, and I’m so sorry you had to find out about us like this,” she apologized.

“Are you getting married?” El asked, eyes wide, looking hopefully happy at the thought.

“Uhm no, honey. No we aren’t,” Joyce answered, failing to hold back a smile at how innocent she was.

“Oh. Well it’s just that Dustin said-“

“El,” Hopper whipped around and cut her off. His face was red, like almost as red as when he catches her and Mike kissing each other when they aren’t supposed to be. His eyes flashed to Joyce, who looked nothing but thoroughly amused, and then back to his kid. “What Joyce and I do when we’re alone is frankly none of you or your friend’s business, alright?”

“Well, you weren’t exactly alone,” El muttered in challenge; she never has been one to be intimidated by Hopper.

This time Joyce had to turn away to stop herself from laughing out loud, like when a toddler swears and it’s inappropriate but hilarious.

“No, you know what? You’re right. And like Joyce already said, we’re sorry.” Admitting defeat seemed to be the only way out of this conversation. “Now if you two will excuse me, I really do have to go back to work. Am I allowed to leave?” The two girls both stared at him, though they didn’t object. “Great.” He gave a single nod and lurched for the door, doing his best to avoid meeting the eyes of any of the kids in the living room.

The two were quiet for a minute until they both heard the front door slam shut.

Joyce wondered if she would ever even see Hop again after this.

“I really am sorry honey,” Joyce apologized once more. “We should

have told you kids before you found out like this.”

El shrugged. “Max said you were doing *it*. That means making love?” El asked hesitantly, hoping not to get another lecture. At least Joyce seemed a little more inclined to honestly answer her questions.

“Yes, yeah,” Joyce nodded. “Those are the same thing. It’s all...sex. We were having sex.” It was probably a good thing Hopper was gone now, as he most definitely would have evaporated hearing this conversation. But as a woman, Joyce felt responsible for helping the poor thing make sense of it all, since there was no way she was going to hear it from Hop. “Do you, um, do know what that is?”

But surprisingly, El nodded. That was something she had coaxed out of Hopper one night after he fast forwarded through the sex scene in the Terminator, only afterward realizing that it probably would have been less painful to just let her watch the damn thing. After incessant pestering, he ended up giving her the most bare bones, anatomically correct explanation of sex, that honestly sounded repulsive to a 13 year old, which left Hopper rather pleased with himself.

Hopper and Joyce were doing *that* in the shower?! Max was right; doing it was gross.

But on the other hand, Joyce had also said making love which sounded different, *better*.

“You love him?” El asked tentatively.

Joyce anxiously rubbed the back of her neck, trying to navigate how to best answer this. If this were her own child, she would answer honestly.

And so after a few more seconds of silence, she admitted with an honest smile, “You know what, sweetie? I think I really do.”

El softened and smiled too.

“But maybe just don’t tell Hop because I haven’t exactly told him that yet, and I think feelings and words like that kind of...scare him.”

“I can keep a secret,” El promised and walked over to give Joyce a

hug.

The rest of the day went by quickly, and despite Hopper's best attempts to work overtime, there was still nothing going on down at the station, and Flo quite literally kicked him out for the weekend.

For the first time ever, he sort of hoped that Mike would be over when he got home. Hell, he'd probably even let him stay late if it meant keeping El occupied long enough for her to forget any questions she may have had for him about today.

But when he arrived home, no such luck. It was just El.

Hopper sucked down two beers and was already starting his third by the time he put their dinner on the table. About halfway through when no awkward questions popped up, he finally allowed himself to relax.

Except El was smart. She was waiting for this, waiting for him to drop his guard. And that didn't usually happen until his fourth beer or so. She'd found that out early on in their time together when she realized her chances of getting an extra snack after dinner and dessert greatly went up with each empty can.

So she'd kept count and waited.

It was almost 9 o'clock when The Twilight Zone ended. El brought him in another beer from the fridge without him asking. He thanked her, surprised and albeit, a little suspicious. It was another hour later when Dallas finished and El brought him another one.

Hmm.

But she watched nearly the entire episode of Miami Vice in silence and went into her bedroom during the last commercial break to change into her pajamas.

"I love Joyce. Don't you?" she asked sweetly out of nowhere, coming back to sit down next to him on the couch again.

"What?" Hopper nearly choked on his own spit.

"I said, do you love Joyce?"

"El, why would you...that's...it's complicated."

"Why? Either you do or you don't."

"It's..." He trailed off. It wasn't complicated. It was simple. Of course he loved her. "Okay, fine," he grumbled. "YES. Okay? Yes, I love Joyce. I **love** Joyce Byers," he repeated for emphasis, his heart nearly pounding out of his chest at the confession. Did he really just say that out loud, and to his kid of all people?

El smiled, satisfied.

"What? Is that what you wanted to hear?" Hopper asked.

El giggled innocently, and Hopper shook his head.

After another moment, he narrowed his eyes at her. "You have a weird look on your face."

"I'm just happy. And tired," El added, yawning in an almost exaggerated manner.

Hopper sighed and dropped his head back against the couch. Though his eyes were closed, he could feel her still staring at him.

"Maybe if you are that tired, then you should get to bed."

"Yeah," she yawned again, agreeing with zero complaints. She leaned over and kissed his cheek, yelling a quick goodnight as she ran to her bedroom, slamming the door shut behind her.

Hopper groaned and dropped his head back against the couch again.

What the hell just happened?

He loved Joyce...He was in love with Joyce Byers...Joyce Byers and Jim Hopper...No matter how he thought about it, it sounded good, and that sort of terrified him. He was really in deep.

Behind her closed bedroom door, El yanked her pajama top off and

pulled out the little black rectangle that she borrowed from Jonathan earlier that day from the band of her bra.

She pushed the stop button and rewound the tape a few seconds. She pushed play on the tape recorder and smiled wide when she heard that she had captured clear as day, *yes okay? Yes, I love Joyce. I love Joyce Byers.*